

Frequently Asked Questions -- MIOCR RFP

Funding Cap

If our county submits two applications (one for adults and one for juvenile mentally ill offenders), can we request funds up to the cap for each proposal or is the cap per county? The funding caps are for each proposal submitted whether from the Sheriff's Department/Department of Correction(s) or the Probation Department.

Are we allowed to submit more than one project for juveniles (or adults)? Yes. There is no limit to the number of proposals a lead agency may submit.

Match Obligation

Can the match obligation be met with any state funds? State General Funds are not eligible as match; however, state dollars that do not come from the General Fund (e.g., realignment funds, Mental Health Services Act funds, Juvenile Justice Crime Prevention Act funds) are eligible as match. Applicants are responsible for ensuring that the use of MHSA funds as match complies with the county's MHSA local plan.

Can Title IV-E monies be used as match? Yes. All federal funds dedicated to the project are eligible as match.

If we are a medium county and request \$1,000,000.00 of grant monies, would our total proposal be written to include the 25% match for a total program cost of \$1,250,000.00? Yes.

Can the 25% match obligation be met by putting funds into one line item category or do matching funds need to be dedicated to each line item for which state grant funds are requested? The only requirement is that the match amount be 25% of the total funds requested for the project (e.g., \$250,000 for a request of \$1,000,000). It is up to the applicant to determine which budget line item or items are most appropriate for the match dollars.

Can the match consist entirely of in-kind contributions? Yes. The 25% match requirement may be met with in-kind contributions, cash or any combination of the two.

Eligible Projects/Services

Is it acceptable to "mix and match" evidence-based practice models? Yes. The ESC recognizes that different jurisdictions have different needs when it comes to addressing the target population, and this perspective is consistent with the intent and purpose of SB 1485.

Can counties use these grant funds to continue existing programs? Counties may not use these grant funds to supplant (replace) funds already dedicated to a program. However, as indicated in the RFP, counties may use these grant funds to expand an existing effort. Program expansion includes but is not limited to adding services to a program that is currently offered to mentally ill offenders and extending existing services for mentally ill offenders to a larger target population or new geographic area.

Can the counties that participated in the previous demonstration grant program submit proposals for new programs or must they reactivate the original programs? Either is appropriate, as long as the proposal meets all of the eligibility criteria for these grant funds, including being anchored in an evidence-based treatment model.

If our county does not have a Juvenile Hall, can we still apply for a grant? Yes, because the target population includes out-of-custody youth with a delinquency petition that was filed on or after July 1, 2006.

Can staff working with the target population provide services in custody? Yes.

Can a county place grant-funded staff in the institution as part of its project? Yes, as long as this is acceptable to the institution.

Coordinated Planning Process

Does the requirement to include local law enforcement in the Coordinated Planning Process mean that all local police departments in our county have to participate? No. Only one representative is required. It is up to the county to decide whether the process should include more individuals from local law enforcement.

If a county does not have a local police department, how can it meet the requirement to include a representative of local law enforcement in the Coordinated Planning Process? That representative should come from the agency that provides local law enforcement services for the county (e.g., Sheriff's Department).

What level of participation should local law enforcement (i.e., police agencies) play in development of the grant proposal? The RFP requires one local law enforcement participant in the Coordinated Planning Process. Beyond that, it is up to the county to determine the extent of police agency participation in development of the grant proposal.

Are local police required to participate in the implementation of the MIOCR project? No.

Who can represent Education in the Coordinated Planning Process? This decision is up to the applicant. The only requirement is that a representative of local education (e.g., superintendent, principal, teacher) participate.

Can we rely on existing entities for the Coordinated Planning Process required by the RFP? Yes, as long as the existing entity includes the individuals who must participate in the MIOCR process. Please refer to the RFP for the required participants in the planning process for proposals targeting adult and juvenile offenders respectively.

Do these officials actually need to participate in the process or can they designate representatives to take part in the discussions? The ESC determined that these officials should participate in the process. To pass the Technical Compliance Review that will be conducted by CSA staff, applicants must list these officials' names, titles and represented agencies in Section IV (A) of the grant application.

Eligible Costs

Would a staff person assigned to the MIOCR program for such functions as billing, clerical support, data collection, record/file maintenance, etc. be considered a part of the program cost or part of indirect costs? The RFP stipulates that counties may not supplant funds – in this case, use state grant dollars to replace other funds currently supporting a staff position. Therefore, for the salary and benefits of such a staff person to be eligible for reimbursement with state grant funds, that individual must be in a newly established position. A county may include the salary and benefits of such a staff person as part of indirect costs as long as the project maintains adequate documentation to substantiate the use of funds in this manner (e.g., a county's indirect cost calculation plan).

If we want to include a portion of an individual's time as part of the program, can we state a certain percentage of their salary in the budget? No. Auditors with the Department of Finance have indicated that it is not a generally accepted principle of accounting to simply calculate a percentage and extend it across the life of the grant. In situations involving individuals who are assigned to the grant part-time, the grantee will need to develop and maintain some type of log indicating the hours and tasks for this staff person or develop a time study. Please refer to the draft Contract Administration Guide posted on the MIOCR web site for more information.

Can state grant funds be used to pay the salary of a judge, district attorney and/or public defender working with a mental health court? Counties may not supplant funds – i.e., use grant funds to replace funding previously directed to established positions within the county. However, if the county establishes new positions, whether full-time or part-time, that are dedicated specifically to the MIOCR project, then grant funds may be used to support those positions.

Which budget line item would we put salaries for individuals in our contracted positions: Salaries and Benefits, Professional Services or CBO Contracts? That is entirely up to the county.

Are data collection costs eligible for reimbursement with grant funds? Yes.

Are expenditures related to a family's "needs" reimbursable with state funds? Yes, as long as those expenditures are related to the design of the project and the grantee maintains adequate supporting documentation to substantiate the amounts claimed on invoices.

Can building renovations be reimbursed by grant funds? Yes. However, the grantee would first need to secure approval from CSA staff.

Target Populations

The RFP indicates that applicants must rely on Section 5600.3(a) and 5600.3 (b) of the Welfare and Institutions Code to define mental illness for the purpose of determining eligibility of juvenile and adult offenders. The RFP also says that an individual must have a primary diagnosis of a mental disorder as identified in the most recent edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders.

Would you please clarify this issue? The intent of the ESC was to follow the same process used by the CSA during the previous MIOCR grant program in terms of defining mental illness. In the last MIOCR program, which focused exclusively on adult mentally ill offenders, applicants were directed to use WIC 5600.3 as a "guideline" in determining participant eligibility but they were not restricted to including only offenders diagnosed with a serious and persistent mental illness. For that program, as with this one, the CSA is leaving it up to applicants to determine which diagnosable mental illnesses (as stated in the DSM-IV) to include in their project.

Is an offender eligible if his/her primary diagnosis is substance abuse? No. While the DSM may list substance abuse as a mental illness (as two workshop participants indicated), the ESC was clear that offenders are not eligible if substance abuse is their primary diagnosis because this would not be consistent with the intent and purpose of SB 1485. However, the ESC also was clear that persons with co-occurring disorders are eligible as long as substance abuse is not the primary diagnosis.

Is a juvenile with a petition filed before July 1, 2006 eligible to participate if he/she is still under the jurisdiction of the juvenile court? No. The intent of the ESC and CSA board was that a delinquency petition had to be filed on or after July 1, 2006. The language in the RFP related to court jurisdiction allows juveniles 18 and older to participate as long as they meet the program entry criteria and remain under the juvenile court's jurisdiction.

Data Collection

Will the CSA's data collection efforts for these grants be like those undertaken by the Department of Mental Health for the Mental Health Services Act program? No. CSA staff will work with subject matter experts and MIOCR grantees in developing an appropriate and meaningful data collection tool that focuses primarily, although not exclusively, on outcome measures related to the offenders' involvement in the local justice system.

Can you estimate how much time will be involved in data collection? No.

However, based on preliminary discussions with members of the ESC and other subject matter experts, it seems clear that the time commitment will be significantly less than what was required for the research design used in the previous demonstration grant program. At this point, staff is considering a “pre-post” evaluation that will include data on clients for the year preceding their participation in the project (e.g., number of arrests, number of days in detention, number of hospitalizations, etc.) and throughout the clients’ participation in the program. We are also considering collecting data on a monthly basis if that is feasible for grantees.

Do we have to establish a control group for the data collection? No. The CSA’s evaluation will focus solely on project participants, using aggregated pre-post data. However, if a county opts to undertake a project-specific evaluation and wants to utilize a control group as part the research design, it certainly may do so.

Will the data elements collected include school-type variables? The data collection tool has not been developed. CSA staff will work with subject matter experts in developing outcome measures that are meaningful in terms of demonstrating the success of the projects in reducing recidivism and, at the same time, feasible for grantees to collect.

Will the CSA be using an on-line data reporting system? No. CSA staff explored this approach as a way to facilitate data reporting; unfortunately, it is not feasible at this time.

Will the CSA be looking at cost savings in its evaluation? With the MIOCR demonstration grant program, a statewide evaluation of “cost savings” presented a number of challenges (and, ultimately, CSA staff did not undertake such an analysis with the previous grants). However, consistent with the intent and purpose of SB 1485, we certainly want to explore options for undertaking a valid and reliable evaluation of the impact of the projects on criminal justice costs.

Proposal Rating Process

How many proposals will each rater review? Except in cases where a conflict of interest exists, each rater will review all proposals submitted by the Sheriff’s Department/Department of Correction(s) or the Probation Department. Six raters will evaluate the proposals targeting adult mentally ill offenders and six will evaluate the proposals targeting juveniles with mental illness. In cases where a rater works for a county agency, that rater will excuse himself/herself from evaluating the adult or juvenile proposal(s) submitted by the county.

Are there specific best practices that the raters are looking for in the programs it will fund? No. Attachment B of the RFP provides a partial listing of resources on evidence-based treatment programs and models throughout the country. Applicants need to anchor their proposed project in an evidence-based practice that has proven

effective in reducing recidivism among adult or juvenile mentally ill offenders and include research data supporting the use of that evidence-based practice.

What would the raters consider an acceptable project start-up time? The raters do not have a preconceived notion about the amount of time involved in starting up a project. The raters recognize that new projects typically take a few months or more to become operational, in part due to county hiring and/or contracting procedures. The raters also recognize that start-up time will vary according to the design of the project.

If our proposal includes an evaluator, will that be rated higher/given extra points? There is no requirement for an evaluator and no rating factor that specifically addresses project evaluation; however, the raters have latitude in how they score proposals on all of the rating factors and may choose to take this into consideration in assessing the merit of the proposal.

Would a county that has a greater need (e.g., more mentally ill offenders) have an advantage in the competitive process? The first factor in the rating criteria is Statement of Need, which examines the impact of mentally ill offenders on the local justice system, identified service gaps in that system, and existing resources for addressing those gaps. Raters may award up to 50 points on this factor. The ESC and CSA board both discussed the importance of directing MIOCR funds to proposals that demonstrate the most compelling need for addressing the cycle of recidivism among mentally ill offenders.

What is the rationale for asking about the applicant's "track record" with other grant-funded projects? The ESC and CSA want to examine the "management capacity" of applicants and one way to do that is to review the applicant's experience in managing other grants. For this issue, raters may consider such things as the applicant's success in expending the amount of requested grant funds and doing so in an appropriate manner (i.e., no audit findings), meeting any match obligation for the grant, and being in compliance with other grant requirements. Raters may also consider whether the applicant achieved desired outcomes with past grant-funded projects and/or received recognition for the project.

For the question on Past Collaboration, do we describe only the applicant's involvement in other grant-funded projects or can we also describe the involvement of the agency that the Sheriff's Office may designate to implement the project? The question asks for the applicant's involvement. It is up to the county to decide whether adding more information strengthens the proposal. Please refer to the rating factors.

For the question on Past Successes, do we describe only the applicant's involvement in other grant-funded projects or can we also describe the involvement of the agency that the Sheriff's Office may designate to implement the project? The question asks for the applicant's involvement. It is up to the county to decide whether adding more information strengthens the proposal. Please refer to the rating factors.

Will there be oral presentations of the proposals? No.

Why aren't the MIOCR I counties also eligible for priority points? AB 1811 requires priority consideration only for those counties that were not able to complete their demonstration program, as initially approved, due to reduced funding levels. This applies only to the MIOCR II counties, as there was no budget reduction for the MIOCR I counties. The raters will give a minimum of one point and up to a total of 15 points (5% of the total points available) to MIOCR II counties submitting proposals that target adult mentally ill offenders, depending on the responses provided in the grant application.

Formatting Issues

Can I include charts, graphs or reference material in the RFP, either within the document or as appendices? Although these items are not required for the RFP, you may certainly include them. If you have technical difficulties inserting charts, etc. into the fill-in portion of the document, please contact CSA staff for assistance.

If I have attachments, reference material or appendices included with my RFP, do these pages count toward the 30-page maximum? Yes. The RFP, in its entirety, must not exceed 30 pages, excluding the MIOCR II counties who will receive an additional 5 pages to answer questions in Section VII.

As MIOCR II counties get 5 extra pages, can we use some of the additional pages for the RFP portion and use the rest for Section VII? No. Each agency receives a maximum of 30 pages for their RFP. The additional five pages are only to be used by MIOCR II counties in order to answer the questions posed for the priority consideration portion.

Do I have to use the RFP format as it is posted on the website? Yes. Proposals submitted must use the RFP document provided on our website. You may not delete our narrative, questions, headers, etc. in order to "create" more writing space. The on-line RFP is already formatted with the margin settings, 12-point font, double-spaced for the fill-in, narrative portions as specified in the RFP. These formatting criteria are part of the technical compliance review completed prior to RFPs going to raters.

The RFP states to answer the questions in the space provided but there isn't sufficient room to respond. Can I use additional pages? Each fill-in section will expand as narrative is typed/copied into it. If you have technical problems, please contact CSA.

Can I use front-to-back printing for the 30 pages? Although the RFP does not speak to this issue, we request that you print the RFP as a single-sided document. If you choose to print the RFP front-to-back, you are still limited to 30 "numbered" pages (not 30 pieces of printed paper).

Miscellaneous

Can a lead agency designate someone from the implementing agency to be the Financial Officer for the project? Yes. However, keep in mind the responsibilities of the Financial Officer, which include maintaining the official budget file for the project (including all grant-related material and documentation to substantiate expenditures) and ensuring that appropriate internal controls are in place for all grant-related fiscal procedures (e.g., deposit of funds and reimbursement of partnering agencies). Also, keep in mind that the warrant (check) issued by the State Controller's Office is made out to the county and sent to the Financial Officer.

Who will be contacted if there are technical compliance issues? As there are 3 individuals who are listed in Section I of the application, we will be first contacting those individuals (i.e., Implementing Agency contact person, Project Director and Project Financial Officer). If we are unable to reach these individuals, we will make every effort to make contact with an individual associated with the RFP.

Can the counties/grant writer contact the raters? No.

Will we be required to conduct a final audit? No. Unlike the previous MIOCR grants, there is no requirement for an audit. However, CSA reserves the right to call for an audit, if necessary, at CSA's expense.

Can the Board of Supervisors' Chair sign the application? Yes, in those circumstances where it is county policy that the Board of Supervisors' Chair sign documentation relating to contract agreements.

Our Board of Supervisors will not be meeting prior to the November 6, 2006 deadline. Will my proposal be disqualified? No. Due to the expedited nature of this RFP process, CSA staff understands that not all applicants may be able to secure a Board of Supervisors' resolution by the due date. However, the CSA will require a Board of Supervisors' resolution by January 1, 2007 as we will not enter into a contract with a county without a resolution.